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Letter dated 5 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the following statement on the announcement of the National Electoral Council of Venezuela of 2 March 2004 regarding the process of verification of signatures in Venezuela, issued on 4 March 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Richard **Ryan**
Permanent Representative of Ireland
to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 5 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

Statement on the announcement of the National Electoral Council of Venezuela of 2 March 2004 regarding the process of verification of signatures in Venezuela issued on 4 March 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union

The European Union has taken good note of the publication, on 2 March 2004, by the National Electoral Council of the preliminary official results of the process of verification of signatures and of the Council's decision to organize an appeals process in relation to those signatures that were provisionally rejected, in the framework of the petition for a recall referendum concerning the mandate of the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The European Union recalls the contents of its previous statement dated 23 February 2004, and reiterates its full support for the important statement made by the Organization of American States (OAS) and Carter Center missions to Venezuela in their joint declaration of 2 March 2004.

The European Union shares the concern of OAS with regard to the application by the National Electoral Council of specific verification criteria and its possible impact on the outcome of the process. No effort should be spared, however, to enable the country to find a constitutional, democratic, peaceful and electoral solution to its crisis. The European Union encourages all parties involved to negotiate constructively towards feasible, fair and transparent formulas for an appeals process that will respect the constitutional rights, the sovereign will and the good faith of Venezuelan citizens.

The European Union deeply regrets the developments of a climate of violence, which has led to human casualties, and calls on all parties to continue to strive for the implementation of the agreement of 29 May 2003 in a climate of mutual respect, tolerance and restraint, and to fully abide by the Declaration against Violence and for Peace and Democracy of 18 February 2003, within the framework of the rule of law and democratic principles.

The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia align themselves with this statement.